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# Navy Medicine in Afghanistan; forward and ready

Filed under LEADERSHIP

(NO COMMENTS)

By Vice Adm. Matthew Nathan, U.S. Navy Surgeon General



Col. Jimmie D. Bailey (right), commander of Task Force Medical-East, briefs Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Charles Green (left), and Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Matthew L. Nathan, during a tour of the intensive care unit at Craig Joint Theater Hospital at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, April 17, 2012. Senior military medical officials from the U.S. and the United Kingdom visited medical units throughout Afghanistan to assess the advances and challenges being faced in the medical community while in a deployed environment. (Photo Credit: Capt. Addie Snay, Task Force MEDA)

My focus as your Surgeon General is to ensure that Navy Medicine is supporting our forward deployed forces.

The U.S. Navy’s global mission is to be a power projection platform, and we provide expeditionary Force Health Protection for the men and women that makeup that platform.

I recently traveled to Afghanistan to visit our people and medical facilities at Camp Leatherneck, Bastion, Bagram, Kabul, and Kandahar.

I saw what you already know...our shipmates are performing at unparalleled levels of mission success, competency, and professionalism.

I ensure that Navy Medicine is doing this successfully, by seeing and hearing firsthand, along with my top enlisted leader, Force Master Chief Sherman Boss, from the operators and providers

in theater. So we traveled into theater, and we did not go alone. U.S. Army Deputy Surgeon General Maj. Gen. Richard Stone, Surgeon General of the U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Charles Green, and United Kingdom Surgeon General Vice Adm. Philip Raffaelli joined us, along with their senior enlisted advisors.

In many respects, I saw exactly what I expected to see: Navy Medicine providing world-class expeditionary care and direct support to the warfighter; however I saw some extraordinary efforts that I would like to share with you.

During our visit, we saw the great joint training occurring in the U.K. for the British-U.S. team manning the Bastion Role III facility. In Afghanistan, I toured many of our Role II and

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Role III combat hospitals including the U.S. Navy-led NATO Role III Multinational Medical Unit in Kandahar. We also visited the Concussion Restoration Care Center (CRCC) at Camp Leatherneck, and the Navy’s Mobile Mental Health Care Teams (MCT) that work throughout the country.

We were all impressed with the exceptional work that they are doing. The way our in-theater forces are able to jointly operate across the medical spectrum while maintaining exceptional care for our coalition forces and the lessons learned from these experiences will shape the way we do business in future forums at home as well as abroad. This joint infrastructure will be invaluable as we move forward in the future of military medicine.

Our medical teams in theater are setting the new standard and establishing the best practices in life-saving trauma care, to treat those with the number one battle injury...concussions and musculoskeletal severe injuries. This provides real-time mental and behavioral health as well as conducting well-being screening that identifies combat stressors and promote resiliency.

A testament to our team’s efforts can be seen in our return to duty rates for concussed patients. Since August 2010 when the CRCC opened, there has been a nearly 98 percent return to duty rate and on average patients went back to work less than 11 days after injury. That’s impressive. You should be proud. I know I am!



Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy Vice Adm. Matthew Nathan talks with a group of service members at Camp Leatherneck, during a visit to Regional Command South-West. Senior military medical officials from the United Kingdom visited medical units throughout Afghanistan to assess the advances and challenges being faced by the medical community while in a deployed environment. (Photo Credit: Capt. Addie Snay, Task Force 31)

I also spoke with many of the senior line leaders of our forces in addition to senior Afghanistan military leaders and they all respect and admire the results and collaborative efforts of all involved in these critical medical missions. I want to emphasize that this vital collaboration among nations has enabled us to save the lives of not only our Sailors, Marines,

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Soldiers, and Airman but the lives of our international and host nation partners as well.

To the military medical personnel serving in Afghanistan, I saw the success of your efforts and impressive skills while serving as Commander, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The continuum of combat care – from battlefield to bedside – is a testament to the dedication, commitment, and sheer determination of those who serve along the way, both the wounded, ill and injured as well as those who care for them. You tell death, illness, and pain..."If you want to get to those I care for, you will have to go through me." I have never been more proud to serve with you in Navy Medicine.

I had the opportunity to talk with many of you during my time there, and as I said earlier, you carry out your mission 24-7, day-in and day-out, under the most rigorous conditions. I challenge anyone to suit-up in that environment and keep up.

Our people are inspirational. I thank you on behalf of a proud Navy and a grateful nation.

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